6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RFI Great Russia RFI

III

Just as in the ideology of Nihilism and Anarchism, revolt against degrading submission and rejection and demand for acceptance in some sects took the form of extreme power-seeking and self-deification. In the sect *Lyudi Bozhii* (people of God), for instance, the craving to become God incarnate or to have a live incarnation of Deity actually present in their midst was so strong that since the time of the sect's founder who claimed to be God Zebaoth (Sabaoth) a whole series of Christs came into being, succeeding one another by a sort of filiation or adoption. Finally each religious community of this sect boasted of having a flesh-and-blood Christ in its midst. They claimed that it was in each man's own power to unite himself to the Deity and to incarnate it in his own body. A woman had the faculty to become *Boginya* (the Goddess) or *Bogoroditsa* (Mother of God) and many women did achieve such self-apotheosis, adding to the number of divinities of each community.[19]

It was by means of suffering and mortification of flesh that candidates for Messiahship competed among themselves for this supreme achievement. These exploits were accompanied with self-glorification. In this way both power-seeking and identification with suffering were realized. The followers would watch for years to see which of the rival pretenders to Christhood underwent the greatest sufferings. The rivals for Godship, on the other hand, often resorted to trickery to prove their claims.[20] But once the issue was settled and a God-incarnate was recognized, the whole congregation owed Him supreme reverence and unconditional obedience which satisfied the contender's craving for power: "I am God, foretold of the prophets. There is no other God than I. Seek ye none other. Where unto ye are appointed, abide therein."[21] On the part of the congregation the desire for Christ-incarnate in their midst manifested a strong need for protective dependence and acceptance.

Hence longing for a world in which truth and justice, kindness and love would reign, in which there would be no abusive serfdom, no subservience, tortures and sufferings, but happi-

6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

795 621 the communistic tenets of the Dukhobortsy in such a way as to turn them to his own profit and advantage. Like other Dukhobortsy, Kapustin too believed that God was in every man, and [781] therefore all men were equal. He said, however, that God first had revealed himself in Jesus and the soul of Jesus has then continually animated new bodies throughout many generations. And by virtue of its higher qualities, and the absolute command of God, the soul of Jesus as it passed from one man to another had invariably retained its identity, and the man in whom the soul of Jesus resided, unmistakenly knew he was Jesus:

> Thus Sylvan Kolisnikof at Nikisk whom many of older among you knew, was Jesus; but now, as truly as the heaven is above and the earth under my feet, I am the true Jesus Christ, your Lord! fall down therefore on your knees and worship me![28]

Kapustin introduced a complete community of goods among [476] his followers. They worked the fields in common and divided the harvest among them. Storehouses were erected to provide against years of dearth or famine. Also various kinds of industries were introduced and the colony showed visible progress in the first few years of its existence. Kapustin had also assembled an advisory Council of thirty Elders about him, from among whom an inner circle of twelve was selected. These were known as "The Apostles." Before he died he endeavored to impose his son as his successor and claimed that when he died the soul of Jesus would enter the body of his son.

[661] After Kapustin's death dissatisfactions grew stronger and manifested themselves in suspicion, mistrust, and denunciation. The Council of Elders developed into an inquisitional tribunal which ruled arbitrarily, interpreting justice according to their caprices. Those who submitted unconditionally were rewarded, those who were suspected of deviation were accused of treachery and of intention to go over to their "enemy" that is, the official Church, and were punished with torture and even with death. The house from which the Elders ruled became known as *Ray i muka*—paradise and torture.[29]

10: French S-4 (no date) 1951 E16 Slavic Peoples
Great Russia RF1

659

and the West, but the fruit it has produced in so much tension and suffering may be such as other parts of the Christian Church may be glad to garner in time of need.

Christianity in Russia has had a very different history from Christianity in Western countries. For long it lived its life in isolation from the West. Its clergy knew no Greek or Latin and the discussions of the Schoolmen passed them by. It had no share in Luther's Reformation or the Counter Reformation and only indirectly felt their effects. It has had, and still has, its own problem of the relation of Church and State and its own ways of dealing with the education and training of its flock. If in modern times it has relied too much upon the external support of the State, it has nevertheless known that its real strength lay in the people's natural sense of religion and the reality of spiritual things.

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It is reported that an anti-religious agitator in haranguing a Russian crowd called upon God, if there were one, to strike him dead. When nothing happened he inferred to his hearers that there was no God because He had not killed him. "No," said the crowd, "He hasn't, but we will." And they did. The story, if true, illustrates also the "dionysian" element in the Russian temperament, which is so liable to sweep them into violent action and constitutes one pole in that striking dualism which runs through Russian character.

But there is better evidence of the religious spirit of the Russians in their feeling for God in nature, their sense of beauty as a link with the divine, their admiration, and in spite of all, their practice of the virtues of charity and humility. The ordinary Russian feels that he can hardly be less than charitable and forgiving in view of the shortcomings of all men before God. In spite of his own liability to outbreaks of violence, the idea of administering capital or indeed even corporal punishment in cold blood, sends a chill of revulsion through him.

There is indeed a strand in Russian religion which administers a shock of surprise to the modern Western who derives his impressions of Russia from newspaper accounts of the activities of the Russian State. Long before the Little Poor Man of Assisi changed clothes with the leper and gave his special

10: French S-4 (no date) 1951 E16 Slavic Peoples
Great Russia RF1

781 inspiration to the religious life of the West, the deaths of the princes Boris and Gleb had made an indelible impression upon the religious thought of Russia. In the interpretation put upon their fate by the Russian Church they became the type of voluntary acceptance of suffering. This aspect of their religion which works so powerfully beneath the surface in the thought of Russians, and leads them to look upon suffering, and especially suffering which is voluntarily accepted, not merely with compassion but with veneration, is not to be dismissed as no more than a manifestation of the melancholy inherent in the Slav temperament. It has its reinforcement, if not its foundation, in the Russian stress upon the "kenotic" Christ, the Christ who emptied Himself of His glory and accepted humiliation and suffering to the culminating point of voluntary death. It is this that makes the Russian regard human suffering and humility, not only suffering for Christ but the mere fact of following Christ in His experience of it, with a sort of admiration and reverence.

It is closely associated with the aesthetic approach to religion and with the sense of man's kinship with the natural world. It makes itself felt in the Russian's scale of values in the sphere of law and of ethics and indeed in his general view of life.

As Fedotov points out, of all the iconographic representations of the Virgin and Child which the Russians took over from the Byzantine Church, the type which they call "umilenie" became easily the favourite. It does not so much claim awe before the majestic dignity of the Mother of God, as express that complex emotional reaction of the human heart to innocence and beauty and pain, for which English has no single word.

The "kenoticism" of Russian religion is but one aspect of it, by its very nature it does not claim attention through any violent expression of itself in the world of affairs. But it is an aspect which must not be overlooked.

792 In Russia, as in the rest of the Orthodox world,[1] the monastic life has always exercised an immense influence. The life of a good monk is regarded as the Christian life *par excel-*

[1] See Chapter X.